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ABSTRACT

This historical investigation explores the foundations of black education in the United States. It focuses on the ideology of the northern whites who labored during and after the Civil War to assure that the ex-slaves -- the freed men -- received proper schooling. The study investigates the role of the Freedman's Bureau, and sets the movement in its economic and social context. It also seeks to provide an accurate narrative history of the freedman's aid movement. One of the major conclusions drawn here is that after a century of dealing with racism and inequality as an educational issue, perhaps it is time to realize those are economic issues utterly beyond the reach of schools. A second conclusion is that liberal educational reformism has, on the one hand, served to drain energy and attention away from basic criticism and analysis of the social and economic determinants; on the other hand, it has victimized, stigmatized, and objectified its clients as extraordinary and needing special assistance, thereby deepening their own sense of inferiority. Perhaps the overriding finding considered to emerge from this study is the conclusion that it is time educationists and education policy makers begin to understand educational history and to approach their problems with a clear understanding of the role of schools as social institutions within a specific social setting. (Author/JM)

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FINAL REPORT

EDUCATING FOR FREEDOM: IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF BLACK EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH, 1862-1872

National Institute of Education Project No. 3-0252

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EDUCATING FOR FREEDOM: IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF BLACK EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH, 1862-1872

I. General Purpose and Potential Significance of the Project

This historical investigation was undertaken to explore the foundations of black education in the United States. It focuses on the ideology of the northern whites who labored during and after the Civil War to assure that the ex-slaves -- the freedmen -- received proper schooling, a luxury denied them under slavery. The study seeks to located the motivation for the expenditure of time and money, to discover the social and political ideals active in the movement. It delineates the reformer's view of the black man and his place in American society, investigates the role of the Freedmen's Bureau, and sets the movement in its economic and social context. It also seeks to provide an accurate narrative history of the freedmen's aid movement. Much of the narrative history is omitted in the following summary of findings in order to more fully analyze the intellectual history and its implications.

As the investigation progressed and some dearly held beliefs were challenged, the investigator broadened the focus of the research in order to more fully understand the political economy of education generally, and of southern Negro education in the 1860s specifically. He began to seek connections between the origins of black education and the tragedy of black schoolingand race relations today. That quest

drove him to a deeper analysis of the function of schooling and the function of liberal school reform in modern society.

Investigation into the ideological origins of black education in the South provides a study in microcosm of the nature of schooling and school reform, and hence has contemporary significance. In some senses it provides an ideal study. For the lines of debate are particularly clear, the vested interested are obvious. The educational system being created had to contend with no organized educational alternatives, and the historical outcome was unambiguous.

The study draws significance also in the fact the the issues at stake have not significantly altered in the intervening century. One of the major conclusions to be drawn is based on that fact: after a century of dealing with racism and disequality as an educational issue, perhaps it is time to realize those are economic issues utterly beyond the reach of schools, and hence to turn reformist energies toward economic rather than educational change. A second conclusion is that liberal educational reformism has, on the one hand, served to drain energy and attention away from basic criticism and analysis of the social and economic determinants of racism.. On the other hand, it has victimized, stigmatized, and objectified its clients as extraordinary and needing special assistance, thereby deepening their own sense of inferiority.

Perhaps the overriding finding to emerge from this study is the conclusion that it is time educationists and education policy makers begin to understand educational history, and to approach their problems with a clear understanding of the role of schools as social institutions within a specific social setting. Such institutions tend to reflect

rather closely the social and economic imperatives of their society. They are not neutral institutions open to change beyond their functional relationship to that society. Nor are they merely "mindless" institutions, responding to inattention and caprice. Schools faithfully respond to the intellectual, cultural, economic and ideological needs of the dominant class, are reformed when, and to the extent necessary, for the continued hegemony of that class, and resist or subvert reform that is irrelevant or contrary to those hegemonic needs.

II. Review of Relevant Research

No previous research has attempted to tap the ideology of the early black school reformers, although a few have developed narrative histories of the movement or some aspect of it. Julius H. Parmelee (1917) provided a list of all the aid societies that is still relied upon, though it has a number of errors. The other major work, still considered definitive, is Henry Lee Swint's study (1941; rpt. 1967) of northern teachers who worked among the freedmen. Swint argued that the freedmen's aid societies were business and abolitionist dominated, the teachers were religious fanatics and abolitionist zealots, and their efforts were ill-conceived and injurious to southern race relations. He was following the interpretation outlined by Edgar W. Knight (1922) and other southern white historians. Swint's monograph has had a notable effect on subsequent writing. He was first challenged by Edgar Bruce Wesley (1957) in an unfortunately obscure journal.

The traditional view of abolitionists, however, has been undergoing serious reconsideration since the early 1960s. The effort weakens the

Swint thesis. James M. McPherson (1964) studied the abolitionists during the Civil War, emphasizing their overarching commitment to racial equality. Willie Lee Rose (1964) provided an exhaustive study of the efforts of one group of abolitionists to set the pattern for Reconstruction in their work with the freedmen at Port Royal, South Carolina. None of the current research on the abolitionists stresses how they translated their philosophy into education, though McPherson dealt with the topic in a portion of his study.

There has been a good deal of interest in the Freedmen's Bureau in recent years. The standard sources are Paul S. Peirce (1904) and George R. Bentley (1955; rpt; 1970). In its interpretation of the impact of the Bureau on education, the latter is not a particular improvement on the former. They both view the Bureau as the instrument of vindictive Congressional Radicals bent on punishing the South. A spate of articles and monographs published subsequently have undermined that interpretation. Based primarily on state-by-state studies and detailed examinations of national politics, they conclude that the Bureau was not a Radical tool, that it broke few new paths, that in many policies it tended to favor white demands over black needs, but that on balance it was a positive help to the freedmen and an unobtrusive, necessary aid to stability after the war. Convenient sources include Martin Abbott (1967), John and LaWanda Cox (1953; 1958; 1969), Joe M. Richardson (1965), and Howard A. White (1970). A few researchers have investigated the Bureau's work in education specifically; see for instance Martin Abbott (1956), William T. Alderson, Jr. (1952), and Alton Hornsby, Jr. (1973). While Alderson relied on Swint's inter-

pretation, the general conclusion is that the Bureau was important in establishing Negro education in the South.

William S. McFeely (1968) has recently challenged the generally favorable reevaluation of the Bureau, but from a different standpoint than traditional attacks. Where earlier writers criticized the Bureau for its insensitivity to the demands and mores of the whites, McFeely argues that the freedman, not the white, was the central figure in Reconstruction, and evaluations must begin with him. On that basis, the Bureau and its head, O. O. Howard, do not come off well. They worked to accomodate and placate southern whites, and ultimately betrayed the freedman. McFeely does not deal with the educational aspects of the Bureau, however.

Finally, a growing body of scholarship attempts to understand the broader national political, social and ideological context that shaped Reconstruction politics. While not concerned with freedmen's schools, these studies help in understanding the broader ideology within which the ideologies of black education developed. They also point to the contradictions in the ideology that eventually undermined Radical Reconstruction. Eric Foner (1970) provides insight into the ideas of the Republican Party at the time of the war. Their orientation was becoming anachronistic with the onset of industrial capitalism in the 1860s, and hence left unresolved contradictions when the Republicans gained power. Much of their ideology, and its contradictions, are clear in the ideology of black education.

The perfect companions to Foner are David Montgomery (1967), W. R.

Brock (1963), and George M. Fredrickson (1965). They focus on the crisis in liberal ideology in the 1860s to discover the roots of the failure of Reconstruction. They found the roots in ambivilence toward questions of equality, growing class conflict in the North, and a resurgence of conservatism. Louis S. Gerteis (1973) underlines the fact that federal policy toward the freedman was eminently conservative. And V. Jacque Voegeli (1967) reminds us again of the racism in the North that was sure to affect northern efforts to establish black schools.

Working from that base, this investigation attempts: to discover the ideology of black education and put it in the context of the dominant northern ideology; to reevaluate the contribution of the Freedmen's Bureau to black education and black freedom; to understand the role of abolitionists in the movement; to contribute to a fuller understanding of the entire history of black education; to reinvestigate the question of northern teachers, northern schools, and a northern curriculum in the schools; and to provide a more complete, accurate narrative and interpretation of the first decade of southern black education. The findings reported below focus on the first concern; forthcoming essays will address the others, and provide a more thorough exploration of the first.

A note on mode of presentation: this report is a highly abbreviated summary of findings which will eventually comprise a monography and a number of articles. The documentation would be entirely too massive and unwieldy and of little interest, and has therefore been omitted in this report. See forthcoming publications for full

documentation. A select bibliography is appended to indicate the range and types of material consulted.

III. The Findings

In the decade following the opening of the Civil War, Negro education, once legally proscribed throughout the South, was established on a firm foundation. Within months of the opening of hostilities, northern whites banded together to raise funds for relief and education of blacks in occupied areas. Teachers were recruited and sent South to open schools, often in extraordinary situations.

The ideologies, motives and actions of that group of northerners had a profound impact on the direction southern black education was to take in the next century, and doubtlessly had an effect as well on the shape of American race relations and the position of the Negro in the American social order. This essay explores those ideologies, motives and actions to provide a better understanding of the foundations of southern black schooling. It probes racial philosophies, social beliefs, and educational ideas. It assumes that the fundamental question in the Civil War and Reconstruction was the destiny of four million bondsmen. The response of those northern philanthropists helped determine that destiny.

Black schools were provided by a number of northern organizations. The earliest were secular *ad hoc* committees organized by abolitionists, emancipationists, and anti-slavery ministers and businessmen. Nearly every northern city was represented by such a

freedmen's aid society, whose work embraced relief as well as education. The churches were not hesitant to join the work. By 1866, virtually every Protestant denomination as well as the Roman Catholics had begun mission and educational work among the freedmen.

Estimates of as many as seventy or eighty different freedmen's aid societies have been put forward by various scholars. A careful survey of all known societies, eliminating duplication due to change in title, and excluding the numerous local auxiliaries to the major secular societies, yields a list of 48 societies, almost evenly divided between secular and denominational.

The freedmen's aid societies all sought financial support from the public, either through established ecclesiastical channels or direct appeals to the public. To set their appeal before their potential benefactors, they published a wealth of material explaining their work. Because they were in rivalry for scarce philanthropic dollars, they were careful to delineate fully their positions and plans.

By careful, exhaustive analysis of the annual reports, monthly papers, broadsides, tracts and other published material, as well as scrutiny of both official and private correspondence of the principal architects of the freedmen's aid movement, it is possible to identify the ideology of each group. Understanding their ideology assists in explaining the directions black education would subsequently go. That understanding also provides important insights into the political economy of the American school, the components of educational reform, and the deficiencies in American liberal racial and educational

ideology. It will be argued that the underlying themes exposed in this analysis continue to influence the school, and, more specifically, the issue of black education, to the present.

The men and women who shaped the early black schools drew upon a rich educational tradition. Common to all was a view of fo[illegible]ling as a mode of moral and mental discipline utilizing primarily [illegible] Protestant Bible and the classical heritage. The sign of an educated individual was the culture he shared with all other educated people. That culture included a reverence for Greek and Latin literature and civilization, modified, of course, by a proper Christian modesty. For those who had gone on to higher education, especially, socialization into a refined, gentlemanly latin scholarship marked the acme of civilized life.

While nineteenth century common schooling no longer made Latin training its fundamental academic aim, it still pursued that broader humanistic ideal suggested in its name: common schools were common not because of their ordinariness, but because, at least ideally, children of all classes attended, participated in and learned a common curriculum. The common school reformers had hoped that in sharing a common culture, children would soften class and caste lines.

The reformers had not trusted solely to the positive operation of commonality to insure domestic tranquility, however. A second component of public school philosophy was a clear sense of the coercive potential of formal education. The school would function as a means of

social control in an era in which traditional institutions of control -- the church, the family, the community, and apprenticeship -- seemed to be failing.

It was a common school also because it was public. Throughout the colonial period schooling had been essentially parochial. Nearly all schooling went on under the aegis of a particular church, which used the schools for moral and religious discipline. Even in areas of public support, the schools were denominational. The state and the church, especially in New England, were co-terminous. Public schools were still religious schools. Denominational prerogatives in the acculturation of youth was jealously guarded.

The rise of the common school in the early 1800s had brought a change in the parochial nature of the schools. As the state and society secularized, and as denominational homogeneity was destroyed in the dynamic young communities, a new institution was called for that would embrace all children. The compromise that was hammered out, and later given articulation by Horace Mann, maintained the religious, and particularly Protestant, nature of the schools, but emptied the schools of doctrinal differences within Protestant ranks. Such a school could attract children of any Protestant background.

The freedmen's aid leaders also shared Enlightenment assumptions concerning the centrality of free education to the preservation of the republic. An enlightened citizenry would guard its rights wisely and participate in republican government responsibly.

It was within that paradigm, then, that the ideologies of black

education would develop. A venerable classical tradition, an equalitarian common school, the contrary note of control implicit in mass education, and a faith in education as the foundation of responsible government, provided the fundamental educational philosophy. Those basic ideals, however, were filtered through more fundamental views of man and race as conceptions of black schooling were articulated. The result was that by 1865 two clear, antagonistic ideologies were emerging. Each conceived of black education in profoundly different ways; each saw the black taking significantly different places in American society. The ensuing ideological battle was prophetic for blacks and their schools; its outcome was decided by the imperatives of capitalist society.

With significant exceptions, the debate over ideology that followed saw the denominational societies lined up on one side, the secular societies on the other. Not incidentally, the denominations were primarily evangelical, while the secular societies attracted religious liberals and even a handful of social radicals. As will emerge in the following discussion, the secular societies chose a consistently liberal position, seeking liberation for the black, while the sectarians followed a conservative ideology, seeking to replace absolute authority by white slave owners with a network of authority relations, including internalized restraints, deference and respect for whites and the dominant bourgeois culture, and the maintenance of a hierarchical social structure with clear lines of domination and subordination. The

black was to fill the bottom interstices of that social structure.

For convenience, labels such as liberal or secular will be applied to the former group, while conservative, evangelical, sectarian or denominational will be used interchangably to refer to the latter. This categorization does violence to the complexity of the actual alignments, so it is worth noting here that in fact the Quakers consistently followed a strongly liberal line, occasionally ranging out beyond their secular collegues, although they retained their seperate sectarian organizations. On the other hand, on some issues the Delaware and Baltimore Associations were much more conservative than other secular societies, and the western secular societies, much more evangelical than the eastern, identified with the conservative ideology, and indeed broke with the other secular societies in the later 1860s.

Two cautions need to be borne in mind as the ideological positions are explained. First, the two positions described are not polar opposites. While the sectarians definitely took a position well to the right on a traditional political scale, the liberal seculars assumed a centrist position. There were options open, and occasionally articulated, well to the left of the liberal option. Neither of the two dominant groups with power to make the decisions took the more radical stance. That position will be explained later. Second, this description idealizes both positions. Probably no one person or group personified either ideology. Especially among the secular groups, there was a good deal of ambivilence toward the pressing social questions brought forward by Emancipation and the northern victory.

Most members of secular societies were members of the denominations against whom they struggled; nearly all shared some of the basic conservative assumptions put forward by evangelical Protestantism.

Buried in the rhetoric of the secular societies was a faith in the ability of education to liberate men. They unconsciously acted on the Enlightenment doctrine that knowledge freed men from superstition, from institutions, and from dependence upon or subordination to other men. Only provide the black with educational assistance and relief for a short time, and he would free himself.

The doctrine was positive, not only in its view of man and progress, but specifically in its view of the Afro-American. In a racist society and a racist age, the liberals repeatedly affirmed the intellectual and moral equality of the races. Hence they called for nothing more nor less than the same type and quality of education given whites.

The need for liberation was obvious. Much of the freedmen's aid society leadership understood the psychological economy of slavery. By keeping the slave in ignorance, investing the master with absolute power, practicing barbarous brutality and violence, destroying the family while sexually exploiting the female, and propagating the full ideology of racial inferiority, southern whites were able to repress, degrade and control the laborer for broad exploitation. That degradation ill-fitted the freedman for independence, self-actualization and the development of free manhood. Education, it was assumed, would disabuse

fettered minds, and would encourage notions of self-reliance and self-worth.

Education was liberating in more direct ways, as well. According to the secular societies, schools would prepare the black for the intelligent use of the franchise and political responsibility. Classical liberal theory emphasized the imperative for a literate electorate. The liberal northern whites agitated for the black franchise and sought to provide an institution to teach the next generation of black voters how free men governed themselves.

Additionally, a liberating education was to provide the black with access to power. Economic, political and social power were clearly essential to survival and mobility in a competitive society. The school would teach frugality, stewardship, moderation, high aspiration, and positive work habits. It would provide training in political power and socialization in dominant values. Access to and the exercise of power were assumed to flow out of the curriculum of the black schools.

Finally, the liberal ideology assumed axiomatically that literate freedmen would strengthen the republic. Their participation and their wisdom would naturally add to the common prosperity. Conversely, failure to include the blacks in a reconstructed America would constitute a moral and ethical lapse the consequences of which would weaken the fabric of society. A great debt was owed the ex-slave, argued the liberal societies; to fail to meet the obligation would betray the purposes and destiny of the nation.

The ramifications of a liberating education received little

further enlargement. The liberated individual carried his own elaboration. The ways in which he developed would depend upon his own free inclinations. The conservative ideology, on the other hand, was much more complex, for it sought not to liberate, but to bind. What the individual or the race was to be bound *to* required greater explanation.

The American common school, as it developed in the nineteenth century, was not designed to liberate, but to tie men more closely to institutions, to ideas, and to other men. The liberals missed that important lesson. But the sectarian ideology reflected a clear awareness of the true functions of the public school. For the denominations, black education was expected to bind the black to the nation, the church, the class structure, and the white race. George M. Frederickson has argued in *The Inner Civil War* (1965) that while northern liberals and radicals may have seen the Civil War as an extension of liberty, conservatives saw it as a means of reestablishing "conservative nationalism and the rights of authority." The conservatives were concerned to see the black assume a distinctly subservient place within a hierarchical society oriented toward superordinant national goals, and to accept clear definitions of dominant-subordinant relationships.

The freedmen were not seen by the sectarians as essentially free men, equal to their benefactors (except in theory -- a distinction made often). They were, rather, barbarians, uncivilized savages, a dangerous, unpredictable, irrational mass. Their greatest need was to be neutralized, civilized, disciplined and controlled. The school and the church were precisely the instruments to bind the African to a

superior society.

The sectarians called on education to "civilize" the freedmen by Christianizing and inculcating proper morals. Everything about black life was inferior and sinful: religion, family, community, personal habits, life style. All had to be destroyed and replaced with a superior life. Such an emphasis would not lead to mobility, as the liberals hoped, but would render the blacks safe for white society.

They had to learn to be responsible citizens, but the denominational societies shifted the meaning of the term. They were equivocal as to whether citizenship included the franchise; preferably it did not. Responsible citizenship was not a means to black power. It was, rather, an acceptance and pursuit of roles, duties and station. The responsible citizen was one who acted his assigned part unobtrusively and thankfully, who lent his weight to stability. When speaking of liberties and freedom, the conservatives reiterated the negative aspects, the duties, limitations and constraints, rather than the immunities, privileges and benefits. They sought to impose restraint and self-control through a web of restrictions.

The denominational societies also argued that education for the black was essential for the safety of the republic. Rather than focusing on the positive contributions of the race to the strengthening of the republic, however, the conservatives concentrated on the threat posed by the freedmen. "Such men, brutish through ignorance, and maddened by poverty," wrote an Episcopalian minister, "would form a constant insurgent element, as untamable as fire, ready to be kindled

by the first frantic impulse within, or the first insidious instigation from without." They must be educated -- elevated, as many wished to phrase it -- to protect the republic. The American experiment was too fragile, too uncertain, to withstand the onslaught of an alien race.

This aspect of the evangelical ideology -- the need to protect the republic by neutralizing the black threat -- could have its positive side for conservative thought as well. While the unredeemed and hence undisciplined black race posed a grave threat to the nation, four million blacks brought to pious Christianity would form a great bulwark to add to the defenses of Christian America. In what many saw as the impending struggle against foreign innundation, Romanism and infidelity, the freedmen were a potential source of strength. Hence the evangelicals felt a sense of urgency. The conversion of the blacks had to be effected before alien doctrines poisoned their minds.

An important element in the conservative ideology, then, was the role the church would play. The school and the church would ramify one another. Both were essential, the one to provide Bible literacy, an entree into the black community, and a quasi-public institution to initiate indoctrination and catechization, the other to provide the more direct religious training, discipline, and evangelism. The two would bind men to the republic and to Protestantism. They would also teach that only through obedience, hard work and faith in God would conditions improve.

To the denominations, then, schooling was not to liberate, it was to control. Just as the common school was often conceived of as a mode

of social control aimed at undercutting immigrant communities and socializing working class children into the demands of early industrial capitalism (and not incidentally providing middle-class children with the skills, culture and traits necessary for the maintenance of their status), so the evangelicals conceived of Negro education as a means of manipulating the black community, limiting aspirations and power, and maintaining dependent status.

Education for the southern freedman was not only to have an impact on its subjects. Nearly every group involved with it assumed it would also affect southern society. Both the secular and the sectarian societies saw schools as a major component in restructuring the defeated South. That the South needed restructuring was beyond question for all groups; a region so immoral as to engage in fratricidal war in defense of slavery had to be rebuilt fro the foundations up if the nation were to be spared further turmoil. And it was one of the fruits of victory and burdens of conquest that the work of restructuring the South fell to the North.

The secular and sectarian groups were also agreed as to the means necessary to produce positive changes in the South. Northerners had observed the South at close range through travel accounts and reports from individuals commissioned to study southern economy and life. The war confirmed the analysis gained from those observations: southern society was stagnant, decadent and lethargic compared to the dynamic, energetic North. The reasons were two-fold. First, the South had not developed the institutional bases of a free society as had the North.

It lacked schools, a free press, an active two-party political system, a broad democratic franchise, viable communities, and an adequate religious life. Part of the reconstruction work would consist of transplanting those New England institutions which northerners interpreted as necessary in a free society.

The South's system of labor constituted its second weakness, and the one the North saw as the primary cause of the war. The optimism and energy of the North was a result of its free labor, free soil ideology, the northerners claimed. Slavery, on the other hand, degraded the labor of both races. It removed the incentive to industry and frugality for the blacks, and taught both poor whites and planters that labor was beneath thier dignity. Only by making the South into a free labor republic would the nation be safe from further traitorous attacks.

This far the liberals and conservatives agreed. Beyond this, however, their opposing application of the New England institutions and free labor system reflected divisions in their ideologies.

The secular societies saw their most direct work as providing the South with the free school. This they could do most efficaciously through the blacks. Enmity toward the North precluded much direct work among the southern whites, but when the whites saw the blacks moving ahead through education, they would avail themselves of school opportunities. All secular society schools were racially impartial, allowing free and equal access to whites and blacks. However, the seculars felt that the blacks deserved the most direct attention because of their past enforced disabilities.

The school provided for the South by the secular societies was the ideal of the New England common school. The liberals stressed the need for commonality and education to break down caste and class barriers. The invidious distinctions of race and class would be destroyed when the children of poor white, planter, and ex-slave sat together, learned from the same text, and competed equally in intellectual and moral growth. As in the northern school, there were to be no denominational teachings. The so-called Horace Mann compromise was to be carried South with the schoolhouse, assuring an impartial but thoroughly Protestant education. Tax support was to be sought to make it a public school; the secular societies consistently expected and actively worked for southern assumption of their schools. Equal opportunity was to be assured. The common school, in other words, was to be transplanted intact.

The liberals acknowledged a need to impose a reformed Protestantism on the South, but left that task to the churches. On the other hand, they reasoned that as *ad hoc*, quasi-public bodies, they were in a much better position to establish schools than were the churches. They each had their unique work to do, but public schools could only be well started by public agencies.

The creation of a democratic region required introducing an opposition party and broadening the electorate. The secular societies were as interested in the political reform of the South as anyone, yet their work in this area was indirect. Previous historians have argued that the educational work was pernicious because it was political.

They charged that freedmen's schools were used to indoctrinate the freedmen to Republican loyalty, that teachers were connected with Union Leagues and other agencies of direct political reform, and that the political activites in the freedmen's education movement was a direct source of the violence and enmity directed toward black schools and northern teachers.

These writers ignore two points. First, all teaching is essentially political inasmuch as it intends to produce a certain kind of individual. Black schooling by southerners would have been political as well, but it would have been aimed at quite different results. Second, the objective need of a victorious party in a civil war to reconstitute the politics of the defeated party is never examined seriously by these writers. The North ultimately failed in that effort, partly from lack of serious commitment. But that should not blind us to the imperative.

Beyond those *caveats*, moreover, it is simply not true that the freedmen's schools were covert bastions of subversive teaching. Exhaustive examination of the curricula, teachers' letters, directions to teachers from the societies, published and private material from the societies -- both secualr and denominational -- fails to locate more than a few isolated instances of conscious use of the school as a source of political propaganda. That teachers had indirect influence, or that in their private capacity they advised, or that the very existence of black schools had political impact, is incontestable: neutral pedagogy is a chimera. The very attempt to introduce the free

school to the South was a political act. But the contention that the school was used deliberately for Republican ends is based on hostility to the schools, not on clear evidence.

But if the schools did not function as Republican front organizations, they were nonetheless seen by the secular societies as instruments in the political regeneration of the region. Through them the blacks would learn the ways of representative government and obtain the literacy assumed requisite to intelligent political participation. That the blacks would form a portion of the southern Republican party to balance the electorate was doubtlessly assumed, though seldom articulated.

The abolition of slavery mandated the imposition of an alternative mode of production. Neither the conservatives nor the liberals intended to give the South an economic system incompatible with their own -- they were not radicals. The new system was the system they perceived as operative in the North, a system of free soil and free labor. As idealized, that system was based fundamentally on notions of equality of opportunity, economic diversification, social mobility, political democracy, and access to land. It made virtues of the values traditionally associated with the Protestant ethic: industry, frugality, enterprise, morality.

Equality of opportunity was obviously lacking in the South. Racial prejudice blocked free and equal competition. The liberals assumed that education would soften race relations. That faith was part of their free soil ideology. They clung to the belief that when

whites came to see blacks as industrious, intellectually able, clean, moral people, and when blacks saw their future tied to the image whites had of them, prejudice would melt away, and black and white would enter the "race of life" on equal terms. Then surely the race would go to the swift. The liberals hoped that the blacks would assimilate those elements of civilization that the nineteenth century sanctified -- marriage, family, literacy, morality, sobriety, cleanliness, thrift, pure speech. That hope was not so much an attack on black culture as a strategy to promote mobility and improve status, contrary to the intentions of conservatives.

The liberal aid societies stressed the free labor ideology. In the earliest years of the movement some groups made land and wage labor available to the blacks with specific intentions of teaching proper habits of diligent work and honesty. Even after most abandoned supervision of farm labor (partly because of revulsion with the exploitation of blacks by the northern capitalists engaged in cotton speculation during the war), they usually maintained sewing schools whose purpose was to teach industry, and spoke often of the moral lessons to be gained from academic study. Those moral lessons were central features of all schooling. As in nearly all textbooks of the nineteenth century, the curriculum leaned heavily toward teaching the virtue of hard work, the importance of thrift and temperance, the connection between virtuous lives and temporal success. Because of the degradation of labor under slavery, the freedmen's aid societies expressed concern that all southerners, but blacks especially, learn the dignity of labor.

The free labor ideology was also assimilated through the structure of the school. Mobility, in the form of promotion, was available to the student who applied himself diligently. Failure was manifestly the fault of the individual. Equal opportunity was assured. Honesty, morality and temperance were rewarded, their opposites punished.

A final compenent of the free labor philosophy touched on another factor in the liberal ideology. That was the link between free labor and free soil. Geographical mobility, providing both a safety-valve against high unemployment, low wages, and consequent social unrest, and a sign of personal freedom, was essential in the free labor notion of social mobility and economic opportunity. Consistent with that belief, the liberals (without full unanimity) argued for the right of freedmen's mobility, to the North, within the South, or to the West.

In summary, the secular societies assumed the full manhood of the Negro, and sought to use education to bring him fully into the benefits of American society. They educated him like a white man, in schools used in the North for white children. They hoped the schools would serve to restructure the South by directly providing one of the northern institutions seen as basic to a stable republic, and indirectly by fostering other institutions: Protestantism; the work ethic; a reformed political system and an enlarged, balanced electorate; and a capitalist mode of production based on free labor and free soil.

When the conservative denominational societies set to work restructuring the South, they followed the tactic of transplanting northern institutions, but their ideology led them to place the

emphases in very different places. The shape of education and the place of blacks was heavily influenced by the ideological differences.

To begin with, the denominations intended to provide schooling, but not on the model provided by the northern experience. They demanded the parochial school, controlled by the church, staffed by properly evangelical teachers, and dedicated to catechizing as well as teaching. The Horace Mann compromise ending denominational hegemony in the schools was invalid in the South, argued the sectarians. In that region there was no need to compromise, for there were no liberal heretics making inroads into orthodoxy, there were no immigrant masses beyond the reach of parochial schools, there was no need for a common school to teach a common tongue and loyalty to America, for the blacks already spoke the language and had no attachments outside America.

The idea of commonality behind the northern common school was also rejected. With equivocal exceptions, the denominations sought not integrated schools in which children of all ranks and races would rub elbows, but segregated schools designed for the "peculiar nature" of the black. While the conservatives paid canting tribute to the equality of the races, they emphasized the theoretical nature of that equality, and proceeded to act on assumptions of inequality. The black needed a special education geared to his specific social needs and his unique character and position.

Clearly, this assault on equality arose out of racist assumptions concerning a special spirituality tied to a libidinous, immoral nature and a child-like, stunted ethical growth. Parochial schools could

provide greater, more direct control over behavior and beliefs than could a public school.

By the 1870s the denominations found they did not have the financial or human resources to maintain a far-flung system of parochial grade schools. They retrenched, giving up their lower schools to local officials, but retaining a measure of control by supplying teachers and dominating school boards. They concentrated instead on colleges and teacher training institutions which began to turn out the black teachers who would direct the moral and ethical content of black education. Northern white religious dominance was assured.

Contrary to the secular societies, the denominations interpreted their work as a two-pronged attack. They provided not only the northern school, but also the northern church. The two were inseperable. They worked together, the school teaching literacy and discipline, the church teaching morality and Christianity, and each verging liberally into the domain of the other. They dismissed the liberal demands that the religious and educational work be divided. "These are so identified," replied the Methodists in 1869, "each with its appropriate work, that they are but parts of a whole -- they are mutually dependent; and to destroy one is to damage all."

The evangelism of the black was important in a broader strategy to convert the whole South. The southern wings of the various denominations had fallen away from truth when they chose to defend slavery. Only the pure evangelism of the North could redeem the people. Their reintegration into the body politic rendered their conversion crucial.

The Protestants also saw mission work among the blacks as important in their struggle with the Catholics. Again involking racist presumptions concerning the nature of the black -- his susceptibility to pomp and show, his emotionality, his bent to superstition -- the evangelicals called loudly for schools that would guard against Romanism.

And the evangelicals were candid among co-religionists that black parochial schools would serve narrow denominational interests. They would assure increased membership, more churches, larger Sunday Schools. Through the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau, schoolhouses were built that became church buildings at no cost to the various home mission departments. Denominational schools meant a supply of potential black ministers to swell the denominations' statistical charts even further. And the training of black missionaries to send to Africa, essentially a covert colonizationist stance, was seldom far from most conservative leaders' minds.

The denominations saw a need for political regeneration. But given their particular way of viewing the republic, they subordinated that goal to the religious goal. They prefered to emphasize the blacks' role as a moral witness to the whites. Their actions in general had the effect of cooling black political aspirations.

As with their antagonists, the liberals, the sectarian societies favored a free labor system in the South. It was a modified system, however. In their schools the sectarians emphasized the need for industriousness and enterprise, frugality and cleanliness. There was a

tendency, however, to emphasize those virtues less for their economic value than for their supposed salutary moral and religious effects. The sectarians were less likely than the seculars to recognize the irony of telling the black -- who had carried the economy of the South on his back for two hundred years -- that he needed to learn to work hard.

The conservatives expected little social mobility for the blacks. They expressly called for schooling to create a stable, docile working force for the South. The blacks were not even to discover the pleasure of economic independence implicit in the idea of the yeoman farmer, according to some individuals; they were to be a black peasantry, locked to the land by training. As laborers they were to learn to obey the authority of the "master," to accept a menial, peripheral place in society, to provide the whites with a contented and profitable labor force, and to honor contracts and respect property rights.

The frredman was not to be entirely blocked from social and economic mobility. By creating normal schools and colleges, the conservative societies hoped to allow the meritorious access to the professions, especially teaching and the ministry. Their services as professionals, of course, would only be in demand in the black community, and their status and training would not fit them for equal participation with white professionals. The effect was the creation of a black bourgeoisie that found limited mobility strictly within its caste, but whose mobility nonetheless preserved the myths of opportunity and openness in American society. The black bourgeoisie was

functionally important in later years as a check on the black community. Receiving respect for its position, yet deeply immersed in the white culture, beholden to white institutions, and jealous of the few prerogatives it had, the black middle class was able to impose a conservative out-look on the black community and provide stability and order in black ghettos.

The geographical mobility of blacks was likewise to be limited by the schools. Fearful of massive migration to the North, with consequent loss of labor power in the South, and racial antagonism in the North, conservatives called for an education that would hold the freedman in the South.

The denominational societies, then, accepted and propagated a racist view of blacks. They tailored a school to fit that view. They chose a strategy in restructuring the South that used the school to evangelized and proselytize, and that simultaneously rejected the historical development of northern education. They advocated a mode of production that spoke of free labor, but that left black labor no freedom. The share-cropping, tenant farming, debt-peonage, convict-lease systems that were clamped on the Southern freedmen may have troubled a few of these men, but most accepted them. They were consistent with the conservative ideology.

Incidentally, the Freedmen's Bureau, long credited for its part in establishing black education, subscribed to the conservative ideology, and threw its weight behind the denominational societies. In all of its work it sought to limit black migration, to teach obedience and

industry, to lower aspirations, and to reject fundamental reform in favor of schooling.

The freedmen's aid societies went to the public with clearly articulated goals and ideologies. The differences between them, and the need of each to compete for philanthropic support, forced them to clarify their beliefs, to argue them clearly and forcefully. The outcome is significant, therefore, for it reflected a rational choice between alternatives by northern wealthy and middle class whites.

By 1870, every major denomination had consolidated its education work. Many had founded ambitious institutions of higher education. Their victory was sure. The secular societies were all moribund save one, which would support a handful of secondary schools for a few years longer.

The northern whites had decided. They would give grudging support to schools that ramified the social class system, that promised safety and stability. They rejected education that sought liberation in favor of education that sought limitation. It was more convenient to give the black the Bible than to engage in activity that would challenge fundamental class interests. Questions of power, of land distribution, of property, of equality, justice and fairness, were to be ignored. The ethical imperatives of emancipation were betrayed. The needs of whites were prior to the needs of blacks.

The liberals had failed to convince white northerners to act on beliefs in equality. Those beliefs were the shibboleths of bourgeois

society, intellectual abstractions designed to provide an illusion of openness and democracy under capitalism. Those ideals did not reflect the operative ideology of the dominant class in a competitive marketplace based on scarcity. And they were beliefs becoming increasingly dysfunctional as the American economy moved from an agrarian - small entrepreneur capitalism toward heavy industrial and eventually corporate capitalism. The needs of the latter were a large, tractable labor force which would acquiesce in its alienation and limit its aspirations. social institutions that would reproduce the social relations of hierarchical producation, and a stratified class system. The type of education imposed on southern blacks laid admirable foundations for the emerging economic order.

It should be emphasized, however, that the alternative offered by the liberals would not have significantly altered the ultimate shape of American race relations. While the schools they envisioned were certainly less racist, while those schools would not have crushed aspirations nor impugned the integrity of the black community and life style, neither could they realize the liberals' hopes. For the liberal ideology offered an impossible panacea rather than addressing the root problem of the freedmen in a devastated, vengeful region. The immediate needs of blacks was for power -- economic, social, political -- and protection. They needed land and other tangible economic stakes. They needed the political muscle that could only come through a revolutionary reordering of regional and national lpriorities. They needed the protection that springs from the action of a class struggling for its

rights and liberties. Schools could not provide these and the many other objective needs. They could provide literacy, but that positive benefit could, of itself, make little difference in meeting non-educational needs.

Furthermore, many of the liberals' efforts, sincere in themselves, ended up stigmatizing the freedmen. Their desire to teach middle-class white values to improve the freedmen's opportunity for advancement, for instance, contained elements of cultural imperialism. The black had convinced the secular groups of his eagerness and ability to learn; they sought to now make him acceptable to white society. Ultimately that meant shifting the burden onto the blacks. They had to prove themselves, accomodate the whites, accept white definitions of worth. In that sense, as well as others, education was not liberating, but the liberals did not realize the contradictions in their ideology. This particular contradiction led many liberals to accomodationist and gradualist compromises in the following years.

And the liberals failed to realize the coercive potential in mass education. While they sought a positive institution, they also sought to turn their schools over to the states as rapidly as possible. Such a desire was refreshingly consistent with their common school ideology. But it also naively assumed that the ruling classes that took control of the schools would maintain the liberals' humanistic orientation. Instead, of course, the southern states turned the schools into oppressive second-class institutions that taught inferiority and docility. Finally, even the liberals' school ramified the social order

by creating an elite corps through selective higher education.

In short, the school was vastly insufficient to the task. It was the easy answer, the cure-all. Education for blacks eased the consciences of liberals while providing conservatives an instrument for the further systematization of degradation and alienation. There was another alternative open, argued by radical whites and blacks, and often by the freedmen themselves. In effect, they argued that schooling was a necessary but insufficient means to equality and liberty. Consistently, they subordinated education to larger, more immediate needs. But they had no voice in national assemblies, and their massage implicitly questioned the nature of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. Their critique was dismissed, for it suggested contradictions in the dominant ideology which were more conveniently overlooked.

Significantly, as the Freedmen's Bureau sought to placate southern whites, it rejected reform proposals and quickly terminated the few important activities it had undertaken. Instead, the Bureau turned increasingly to education. In the dialectic between white and black aspirations, the school was the synthesis, the compromise. It was the reform both whites and blacks would accept. It was an easy panacea, certainly easier than the fundamental changes needed.

Many of the themes in black education that would emerge in the later years were anticipated in the early ideological debates. Booker T. Washington's stress on industrial education was a refinement of the conservatives' stress on creating an enlightened, docile labor force. His corrolary themes of accommodation, gradualism, rejection of

political activism and acceptance of underclass status were characteristics of the early freedmen's schools. W. E. B. DuBois' challenge to create an intellectual leadership echoed earlier justifications for Negro higher education. Segregation-integration was fought over in the first years of black schooling. The use of schools to solve racial problems was advocated in the 1860s as in the 1960s; education as a panacea for social and economic disabilities remained a theme for a century; agitation for increased, altered, or reformed schooling served to co-opt liberals' energy, while its failure provided conservatives with justification for their ideology. Consistently, the focus on black education provided an easy alternative to focusing on the systemic nature of America's race problem. Consistently, it was an inadequate alternative. Rather than seriously questioning the material bases of racism, or the roots of disequality in a fundamentally and functionally disequal society, or the importance of the school failure of the poor to economic, cultural and ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie, Americans have blamed the schools, or, more insidiously, blamed blacks themselves for their school and socio-economic "failure."

IV. Conclusions

Much of the naivety of the early reformers in black education can be excused. They were too close to a novel situation, and the common school was too new for them to realize its true political economy. Over a century later, however, there is no excuse for naivety. The basic problems have not changed in spite of massive expenditures of

money and energy in educational reform. Obviously, the basic problems *are not educational problems*, and are hence not amenable through educational change. Inequality, poverty, school failure, discrimination, segregation, and the related issues are the results of racism. Racism, in turn, is a product of an economic system based on scarcity and competition. Without altering the nature of the system, it is cynical to expect meaningful change to occur in the lives of the poor and minorities through inconsequential institutional tinkering.

To further compound the issue, whenever racism has been recognized as one of the basic social problems, it has been misinterpreted as merely an educational problem itself. Integrate schools, help children to learn to know one another, argued the liberals of the 1860s and of the 1950s and 1960s, and racism will melt away.

It did not, of course. For the racist has rational, objective reasons to fear and victimize racial minorities. He and they are in competition for too few low status jobs and inadequate access to culture and prestige.

The fad of the 1960s was the faith of the 1860s. Give the Black and qual chance, guarentee equality of opportunity; then he will sink or swim on his own merits. Again the emphasis was on education, and the underlying assumption was that there were sufficient material and status rewards to give to all who were meritorious, and that a few hours a day in a reformed school would counteract the modes of self-presentation, methods of learning, cultural identifications, and values learned in disequal social environments. Inevitably, the standard

to be achieved was identification with the social environment of the bourgeoisie.

The freedmen's aid movement attacked the integrity of the black community by insisting on changing the black family into a model of white middle-class decorum.. They refused to recognize, and the cultural deprivation theorist of the the past decade refused to recognize, the arrogance of their efforts, or the material base of the cultural and familial differences between the bourgeoisie and the underclass. Their work provided reactionaries and racists with material to construct pseudo-scientific theories of racial inferiority. Those theories in turn are used by conservatives to develop further ideological justifications for stratified, disequal society. The racist meritocracy then appears fair and unassailable.

Thus liberal educational reform, by curious but consistent irony, becomes a tool for the elaboration of a conservative class society. The meritocracy is rationalized, the alienated are neutralized, the elite gain further advantage from the systematization and mystification of social processes, and cultural hegemony is reinforced.

School reform has functioned to achieve conservative ends in other ways as well. Whenever it has been successful, it has served to fragment the working class by maximizing racial tensions and by appearing to give favored treatment to one group over another. The potential for heightening class conscience and developing class solidarity is thereby undermined. The result is increased hostility, a tendency for the underclass to victimize itself, and to turn its aggressions inward

rather than focusing on the systemic causes of its oppression.

School reform is also functional to the conservative order inasmuch as it buys off the sincere concern and energy of liberals and radicals. It channels that concern and energy into dead-end reformist activity in areas in which those activities will yield few or no positive results. The activists usually end up defeated and bitter. Meanwhile, their analysis and critique of the real nature of the problem has been co-opted by the apparent malleability of the schools. Consistently, the reforms advocated by the activists which can be subverted to the ends of the conservative order are the reforms that are accepted. Those that might threaten that order are washed out.

Reform has been functional, finally, in its ability to give the illusion of change. Convinced that changes are being made, the minority community sublimates its discontent. When those putative changes fail to alter objective conditions, the minority community accepts the blame for the failure, internalizes its supposed inferiority, and becomes more thoroughly entrenched in the lower class, thereby reinforcing the conditions that led to the reforms in the first place.

In short, the school was a panacea when imposed upon the black community during the Civil War. It functioned then to save the middle class from facing up to the revolutionary changes necessary to realize the promise of freedom and equality. The school is still used as a panacea and is as ineffective today as it was then. It is still saving the middle class from pursuing hard answers to racism and class antagonism.

Racism is not an educational problem -- the place of the black in American society is not an educational problem -- they are class problems. The school is not simply an inadequate tool to the solution of class problems: it is precisely the wrong tool. Education is a dominant class instrument of social control. Through it the social class structure and the social relations of production are reproduced. Neither a century and a half of public education's history, nor a century of black education's history provide hope that it can do any other.

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